7: Thompson--380-381 J-4 (no date) 1937 Laotians-1-2
116, 181, 186

"In proportion, as the Laotian is the national group which has the least political and economic importance in Indo-China, so it is the country where the French find themselves most happy. Not that there are not some of the racial unpleasantnesses evidenced in a centre like Luang-Prabang, but in Laos the friction that seems inseparable from all colonization is at a minimum. The reaction to mutual contracts is the same as in Cambodia, but more intense in degree. For the rare Frenchman who sees in the Laotians a silly, lazy, and naïve people, there are hundreds who are charmed by their gentle affability and their aesthetic appearance. If they understand and like the Laotian character, there are no limits to the devotion they can inspire. But an offence to Laotian pride, albeit unconscious, or demands for sustained effort on their part, will meet with instantaneous defeat.

The effect which the French have had upon the Laotian people is as yet--perhaps because the economic exploitation is so dilatory there--very slight in comparison with the influence Laos has had upon the French. By contrast with the sombre inscrutability of the ambitious Annamites, the easy-going Laotian is infectiously gay. Suddenly it seems the simplest thing in the world to be happy. Laotian family life has an archaic simplicity. The country is an earthly paradise which offers a beauty and nourishment that demands no effort for its enjoyment. Partly it is because Buddhism has encouraged a life without violent desires, but it is also due to the climate which has conspired to reject effort and to encourage an immobile happiness. For the European, wearied with Western greed

and strife, Laos seems to be the answer to [381] all his problems. Laziness is an idle reproach in a land where work would obviously make one less rather than more content. In fact, Laos is in itself a passive reproach to the futility of Europe's bustling activity and soul-searchings. It is a museum-piece of earthly happiness, a reply to the West's gloomy disillusionment. Even the Civilizer, with all his utilitarian baggage, hesitates to trouble its idyllic calm. If Europeans are forced by a grudging nature to wrest a precarious living from it by irksome and boring toil, the Laotians have not had to submit to such indignity. They render lip-service to European superiority, because it is too much trouble to be impolite, but the Laotians do not believe in it. Nor does the European for long who lives in their amiable midst. Europe is well lost to gain a Laotian soul."

10: d'Orleans--306-307 T-3 (1891-92) 1894 Laos
116, 181

"The Laotians of Luang Prabang, in their way of speaking and general demeanour, give me the idea of [307] what the citizens of a small Greek republic might have been like, and I can fancy the Athenians, putting the æsthetic sentiment upon one side, to have been of a like disposition, lazy, fond of gossip, and of an easy saunter, devoted to flowers, women, and music."

10: d'Orleans--315 T-3 (1891-92) 1894 Laos
116, 181, 517, 609

"... They are a curious people; lazy without being fools; of equal fortune, as a rule, without great wealth or great distress; of a fairly pacific character; well disposed towards foreigners without exhibiting the intolerable curiosity of the Chinese; very religious, more, perhaps, from habit than from strong convictions; and, what is so rare in the East, treating women and girls with deference. For, while very free in their morals, they have their serenades and their 'Courts of Love,' reviving in the midst of Indo-China practices which belong rather to the Europe of the Middle Ages. There is something poetical, chivalrous and French, or, to go back to an earlier period, something Athenian in the inhabitants of the Laos; and if they have not the artistic feeling of the Greek, they have no desire for a knowledge of luxury. Having very little to earn, they do not work much and their existence is more unfettered."

23: Franck--327[2] T-2 (1924) 1926 Laotians
116, 142, 181

"The difference indicated how great is the adaptability of the human frame, for these men were if anything larger, sturdier, certainly more visibly muscular than Chinese carriers. They were like those muscle marvels one sees in gymnasiums and in physical culture magazines, no good at all beside the wiry little shrimp when it comes to real sustained hardships. Unless hunger or the white man drives them, the Laosians do little work; they are so happy-go-lucky in their tropical fairy-land that their rulers even have trouble making them keep their communal granaries filled against possible famines."

25: Brodrick--101 S-3 (1939) 1948 Laotians
116, 181, 522, 577

"The Laotians like to laugh, that is to say that they like to enjoy the circumstances which move them to mirth and then they like to go on laughing because laughing makes them, as all of us, feel happy... And, if it is incongruity which moves us most to laugh, then those are most happy who live in a society full of conventions whose breach is ridiculous, provided, of course, that such a breach is not such a sin, such a crime and such a misdemeanour that laughter outlaws us. The Laotian has plenty of conventions, but he feels they are made to be breached. Happy people.

The Laotian is cheerful and serene and contented, perhaps from some strange physiology of his glands, of his bodily make-up and of his environment, or of all of these, but he is most of all happy because he has but few needs."

25: Brodrick--101 [3] S-3 (1939) 1948 Laotians
116, 181, 224, 276

"The men and the women both smoke and often they smoke pan, a sort of hemp, not unlike the Moroccan kif, but the Laotians mix their pan with tobacco. And everyone chews betel.

The Laotians' ideal in life is to chew betel, to drink rice-alcohol, to make love and to sleep--they are very good sleepers. Their economy is still half pre-agricultural, hunting and fishing afford food and amusement, and amusement, of course, because men are not wholly dependent upon the product of the chase."

26; Brodrick--60 [3] S-3 (1939) 1944 Laotians
116, 181

"The French-protected Laos are a nonchalant, easy-going people, averse from any sort of work, much given to song and love-making and professing a dreamy, cheerful sort of Buddhism. The Laotians' care-free melancholy they call su-su--perhaps the Potruguese [sic] saudade is the nearest equivalent word in a European language--and the Land of Susu is one of the most delightfully unreal places one can well discover."

34: Thompson--168[2] J-4 (no date)1947 Laotians
116, 563, 463, 181

"This fear and dislike [P. H. : of the Annamese] is also felt by Cambodia's northern neighbors, the Laotians, who are even less able to resist Annamite infiltration. The Laotians do not appear to share the capabilities of their relatives in Siam and resemble the Cambodians in regard to farming and industrial incompetence. Although they are less talented as craftsmen, they are more skillful as boatmen and as merchants. Under sympathetic tutelage, however, they have shown some ability in forestry and even in mining."

68: Mouhot--138-139 N-5 (1858-61) 1864 Laotians-1-2
116, 181

"The Laotians of Leuye [HD: southeast of Pak Lai, in what is now Siamese territory] appear to me more industrious than the Siamese, and, above all, possess a much more [139] adventurous and mercantile spirit; and although, both physically and morally, there are great points of resemblance, yet there exist shades of difference which distinguish them at once, and are apparent in their dialect, or rather patois, and in their manners, which are more simple and affable. They are all much alike in features; the women have round faces, small noses, large almond-shaped eyes, thick hair, the mouth large and strongly-marked; but the men do not exhibit so great a diversity of race as they do in Siam.

Alas! what a journey my fragile collection of specimens, so difficult to gather together, has still to take, and what various accidents may befall them! Those who in museums contemplate the works of Nature do not think of all the perseverance, trouble, and anxiety required before they are safely brought home.

The Laotians have not the curiosity of the Siamese, and ask me fewer questions. I find them more intelligent than either the latter race or the Cambodians, and among the villagers especially there is a curious mixture of cunning and simplicity. They do not as yet seem to me to merit their reputation for hospitality, -- a virtue which appeared to be much more practised in Siam. I should never have obtained any

means of conveyance without the letter from the Viceroy of Korat, and my experience has been that they are less respectful, but at the same time less importunate, than the Siamese."

69: Lewis T-5 (1950) 1951 AM1 Indochina
Laotians AM8

sufficient for his requirements. If there are six members of the family, six standard, equal sized portions of land will be cultivated. If a child is born into the family another piece of land is cleared and worked. When a member of the family dies, whether it be a baby or the grandfather, cultivation of his portion will be stopped. Just enough is produced for the family to eat and to provide a small surplus sold in the market – *with the bonze's approval* – to buy occasional strict necessities, like a silk shawl and a bicycle for the daughter. There is no social insurance and there are no poor. The old and the sick are supported by the young, or, where they are left without able-bodied providers, by the community, and the bonzes give instructions for the necessary land to be placed under cultivation for them. The accumulation of wealth which is not to be used for definite, approved purposes, causes a man to lose prestige among his neighbours, just, as in the West, the process is reversed. The main difference, it seems, between Buddhism in Indo-China, and Christianity – apart from any question as to their relative merits – is that, whether we admire it or not, the former is largely put into practice.

It is a stimulating reflection that the Western millionaire, obsessed for the sake of social distinction with the amassing of enormous possessions – little of which he can personally consume – would attain the same ends of personal celebrity under a Laotian Buddhistic order of things by his priestly austerities – by embracing the most abject and prestige-conferring form of poverty.

For this reason perhaps the local Evangelist missionary and his wife have made no converts. Like all who have lived among the Laotians they are charmed with them – although, of course, disappointed at their blindness. They also deplore their immorality.

In the matter of converts the Evangelists have been no more unsuccessful than their Portuguese, Spanish and French forerunners. The Laotians having little capacity for abstractions, either in their

69: Lewis T-5 (1950) 1951 AM1 Indochina
Laotians AM8
Miao AE5

language or religion, cannot follow the subtlety of Western religious concepts. They have a passion for taking things *au pied de la lettre*. Being told that the basic commandment of Christianity as well as Buddhism is 'thou shalt not kill', they cannot swallow such reservations as capital punishment and 'the just war'; while casuistry repels them. Moreover, a bonze, the spiritual leader of the country people among whom he lives and works, occupies by virtue of his rigorous fulfilment of the principles of his religion, a position in their esteem accorded in the West, say, to a boxing champion. The Laotians have come to associate the prestige of sanctity with certain abstinences and uncomfortable practices. The bonze gives an example of utter renunciation which is awe-inspiring by comparison with the minor self-abnegations of the villagers. The Laotians, therefore, although tolerant in the extreme, are not impressed by the worth of a would-be spiritual leader who presents himself to them loaded with material possessions. And this negative attitude deepens into a certain aversion if, as usually happens, the holy men of the West spend most of their time hunting in a country where animals must be allowed to die of old age. I fear that where the austere Dominicans, and the Jesuits failed, there is little hope for the Evangelists.

However, the missionary was far from despondent. There were Meos in the mountains not far from Vientiane, and just as in the plateaux of Viet-Nam the Moïs had not rejected the Gospel, so here the primitive peoples of the mountains seemed promising material for evangelization. There would be no risk of jeopardizing conversion by hunting, among such hearty amateurs of open-air sports as the Meos, and if the missionary had more of this world's goods than they – well, that was a sure sign that his *ai* (or spirit), was stronger, and it would be a good thing to imitate him. Before the Meos could trouble themselves with renunciatory religions they would have to create a comfortable and abundant civilization for themselves. There was no chance of becoming sated with prosperity at the top of their mountains.

285 lacquer -- red on the inside and black on the outside -- and deco-
532 rated with a fine gilt design which makes a border, like a galloon" (1).
175*

1. Cf. G. Maspero, ibid. /Un empire colonial francais: l'Indochine. Paris, 1929-1930/, pp. 190-191.

286 Even today weaving remains women's work, and is done solely in
462 the home. The materials, which may be silk or cotton, striped or
532 splashed with colors, embroidered or spangled with gold and silver thread, nevertheless acquire, under the action of light and carefree hands, chatoyant, harmonious or dazzling tones, and yet the looms which are used are simple in the extreme. Patterns "are obtained, as before the invention of the Jacquard loom, by alternately isolating or raising certain woof threads by means of thin bamboo splints" (2).

2. Cf. L. de Reinach, ibid. /Le Laos, posthumous edition, Paris, 1911/, p. 333.

181 Thus did the Laotian of the seventeenth century live in peace, respecting the law of the least effort with an amiable perserverance amidst his laughter and his games. . . . The princes were perhaps the
/565/ only ones in the whole kingdom to know any of the worries which power and its exigencies bring, and it was for not having wished to compromise with his authoritarian principles that King Souligna, towards the end of his reign, compromised the destinies of his people forever.

643* Condemnation of the heir apparent to death. He had three chil-
175* dren, a son Tiao Ratsabout and two daughters. His son married Nang-
648* Tian-Koumali, who gave birth in her turn to two children, King-Kitsarath and Intha-Som. Nang-Tian-Koumali was the sister of a prince of the Sip-Song-Panas who had been driven out of his country by a Chinese invasion and whom the king of Lan-Xang had welcomed in Vientiane together with his family. Tiao Ratsabout, however, committed the imprudence of seducing the wife of the chief palace page. In accordance with his edict which punished the crime of
/684/ adultery by death, Souligna pitilessly referred the deceived husband's complaint to the royal tribunal and allowed his son to be sentenced to capital punishment

The result was that at the king's death, which occurred /130/ in 1694, the direct heirs to the crown were his grandsons King-Kitsarath

Tribal Tai

291 the Deng-Thais, is applied to the edges of the gown. It is further
563 ornamented [233] *on* the outside edge opposite the buttonholes with colored silk embroidery which does not go down below the waist.

This garment is also folded in half lengthwise and worn rolled around the body with the sleeves left hanging.

302 The women wear their hair parted down the middle in front
301 and rolled into a sort of long tassel behind which is contained within the folds of a little turban. The latter is wound above the forehead and the free end inserted under the first turn, on the nape of the neck. This headdress is quite similar to that of the Annamite women in Tonkin.

In certain regions of Laos, Thai women wind their hair into a sort of coil which girls wear loosely down their neck and betrothed or married women wear on top of the head. Thai jewelry is made of heavy silver and is of the same type as Laotian jewelry. The men wear bracelets on their wrists.

262 Food. The Thai diet is like that of the Laotians, but they prefer
264 non-glutinous white rice and use chopsticks like the Chinese and Annamites.

276 The use of betel is quite widespread among the Thais, but in contrast to the Laotians they keep their teeth white. The Thais smoke the oily, opiated tobacco of Tonkin and China in bamboo waterpipes whose tiny bowls only contain a small pinch of tobacco. They also smoke a local variety of tobacco, either in cigarettes or in pipes with a highly worked clay bowl into which a long stem ending in a glass or jade mouthpiece is inserted.

156 Character. Although serious and reflective, the Thais have a vivacious and friendly character. They are somewhat cold in appearance, but are sound friends and highly affable when one gets to know them better.

[70] Gentler and more timid than the Laotians, they have no taste for the art of war and it is difficult to get them to stay in the native militia.

433 They are very self-seeking and much more miserly than the Lao-
438 tians. [234] It should be noted, moreover, that since they produce
156 everything themselves and are a people of farmers and livestock breeders, they do not have, by virtue of their ever sedentary occupations, the opportunities which these latter have to enjoy fairly high profits resulting from commercial transactions, nor the special habits which contact with different races gives.

•181 The Thais love pleasure and celebrations. Guaranteed their daily
461

181 bread by their work, they have scarcely a care for the morrow.
461 Scrupulous observers of the traditions handed down to them by their ancestors, they live an utterly carefree life and instinctively dread everything foreign or unknown to them.

463 Occupations. The men busy themselves with the tasks of farming,
241 fishing and hunting. They are very industrious and skilled farmers,
462 and can draw admirably on the soil's resources. They bring in the water needed for irrigating their rais or mountain ricefields through ingenious canals built along the sides of hills, and they also know how to capture springs, often very distant ones, for the same purpose. To decorticate paddy, they use mills driven by artificial waterfalls. The women perform the household chores, take care of the children, make and mend clothes, harvest and spin cotton, breed silkworms, unwind the cocoons and mill the silk. Theirs also is the task of supplying the home with water and with wood which they gather in the forest, as well as sowing, transplanting, weeding, harvesting, getting in and decorticating the rice. These many tasks leave Thai women and girls little leisure, and it would thus seem only natural that they should profit by a moment of pleasure, whenever one presents itself in the midst of their multiple duties. They do, in fact, go in for fun eagerly and behave as keenly, despite their more reserved appearance, as their Laotian sisters.

361 Houses. There is no difference between Laotian villages and Thai villages, except that the latter are better kept and cleaner.
342 Thai houses are generally longer and higher than those of the
592 Laotians, by reason of the custom which decrees that the whole family—parents, children and grandchildren—shall live under the same roof. Some Thai houses are as much as thirty meters long and from eight to ten meters wide. In rare cases one finds much larger houses which are from seventy to seventy-five meters long and twenty-five meters wide.

342 Thai houses very often have no verandas on their long sides, but
554 always have two, one at each end, which are covered by rounded roofs and serve as reception terraces or antichambers.

The houses of mandarins and notables can be distinguished from the others by the fact that the roof rafters and the trusses of the gables extend above the line of the roof and cross. These members are decorated with wooden silhouettes or scallops ending in discs which, depending on their number and arrangement, indicate the rank of the house's owner.

Tyibal Tai
Kha

291 The men's costume is like that of the Laotians. A few, however, have adopted the Burmese costume, turban and all, in which case they let their hair grow and roll it in a coil instead of having a brush cut.

The women wear a very long skirt with broad stripes running across it which is fastened beneath the breasts. The bust is covered by a closed jacket or bodice which is cut straight and made of cotton or silk [302] of varied colors. Their hair is rolled in a coil on the nape of the neck [301] or is held in place around the head by a narrow band of cloth and allowed to fall freely down the back. Both sexes wear metal cylinders in their ears, like the Lus, and silver jewelry.

[142] The Youns are more robust than their fellows, and also more industrious. The women are perhaps less pretty than the Laotian women, but they are just as friendly and merry.

276 [251] Both men and women chew betel, and also "Mieng" (green tea, fermented and salted). They smoke tobacco in enormous cigarettes rolled in dried banana leaves. [Illustration alongside text here]

The Youns are primarily farmers and livestock breeders. They excel in breeding and training oxen as draft animals.

212 We have seen that the Youns, although they speak the same lan-
292 guage as the Laotians, have their own form of writing which is generally used for religious writings. Their bonzes, who are highly learned for the most part, are renowned for their expert knowledge of the rites of the Buddhist religion.

101 Marriage, divorce, polygamy, births, funerals, celebrations and festivities are all the same among the Youns as among the Laotians, except for a few minor differences in detail which we need not mention here.

THE KHAS

619 Before entering into detail about the mores and customs of the
• 181 main Kha families, we shall again have recourse to the learned work by the Superior Resident in Laos in order to give a general sketch of this race which represents at least a third of the population.

[252] "They are to be found throughout the territory, and are divided into more than sixty families. As much as those who inhabit northern Laos are docile, manageable and respectful, so are those who inhabit the southern part of Laos proud, independent and warlike, particularly the tribes inhabiting the mountains which separate us from Annam.

Kha

586 and to the family of his accomplice. In a case of flagrante delicto,
684 however, he has the right to kill the guilty parties.

[462] Kha women, when married, are renowned for their austerity, and their conduct is usually exemplary. Moreover, they are very soon disfigured by precocious and repeated childbearing, as well as by the difficult work which they do, and after two or three years of marriage the poor women are no longer tempting to anyone.

764 Deaths. Cremation is not practiced by the Khas. They bury their dead in as summary a fashion as the Lus, and for a few days bring food to the freshly filled grave. Then the latter is abandoned.

When a chief or a rich man is to be buried, the body is placed in a coffin hewn from a tree trunk.

• 181 Character. Like all oppressed peoples, the Khas are reserved and timid. They are afraid of innovations and new faces. But in intimate gatherings with their own people they are just as merry and love music, dances, celebrations and festivals just as much as the other peoples of Laos.

535 Music and dancing. They know certain dances imitated from
536 the Lus, pantomimes (1) which resemble the I-Ke of the Burmese,

(1) They also have the habit of performing scenes in pantomime, rather like extremely primitive ballets. We shall describe one such scene:

"A group of girls, guarded by two respectable men, are pursuing the pleasures of dancing. A rogue comes up and tries to make off with one of the girls. After a few unsuccessful attempts he succeeds in eluding the guards' vigilance, jumps forward to seize the girl on whom he has designs, and clasps her in his arms. But his happiness is too much for him and he falls senseless at the feet of the girl he wanted to abduct." (Le Laos français.) - [Lieutenant-colonel Tournier (Superior Resident in Laos), "Notice sur le Laos français," in Revue Indochinoise, Hanoi, 1900.]

and [255] singsong legends in which the r's and k's roll out in terrible
533 fashion. They also have songs which they accompany on flutes, clarinets and single-stringed violins. Some tribes have xylophones, these being instruments composed of bamboo tubes of [Illustration here] different thickness and length, each of which produces a tone varying with its size. It will be seen that by striking with a [256] stick of wood on these tubes, a combination of more or less harmonious sounds will

Kha

result. But the Kha ideal is to possess a battery of gongs of different sizes and timbres, and with these they manage to obtain quite perfect chords. 533

Industry. Withdrawn in their mountains where they live in small isolated groups, the Khas use their leisure time to make many basket-work and hollow-ware products which have a mark of elegance and a great deal of delicacy. Other tribes make paper from wood pulp, weave mats from rattan and bamboo bark, etc. They use all these products in trade. 433

Finally, certain Khas exploit deposits of iron ore and transform it into farming implements, while others wash gold-bearing sands. 316

In general, although the Khas are industrious they work only to procure what is strictly indispensable. They cannot resign themselves to staying away from home for any length of time and dread any stay in the low country, which they say is unhealthy for them. Since they have particular aptitudes for woodcutting, however, they have been successfully employed to cut teak wood in the forests on the right bank of the Mekong which are situated in Siamese territory. But it must be admitted that there they are in mountainous country and in the midst of forests, as in their native region. 461 [313]

The Khas of southern Laos. In southern Laos Khas are found who differ very little from those of Upper Laos. We shall not concern ourselves with them, but shall deal briefly with the many more numerous ones who have particular mores and customs.

The Djarais, the Rades, the Bahnars, the Cedangs, the Peunongs, the Rognaos (1), etc. are the principal types of these Kha tribes. [619]

(1) See Appendix XVIII.

which for the most part are still independent.

These people are proud, large and muscular, supple, trained in all forms of bodily exercise, bold, warlike and brave. 181

These qualities, moreover, have been developed by their peculiar way of [257] [Illustration] [258] [Blank page] [259] life. Accustomed to hunting slaves from which they extracted large profits by selling them on the banks of the Mekong, these Khas have had to resort to continual expeditions in order to obtain their human game. 567 721

For many long years, in fact, they could acquire [Illustration here] the gongs, buffalo, metals, textiles, etc. which they needed only by selling captives, generally Annamites, whom they went and 567